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ABSTRACT

Chapter 1 of a revised volume on school leadership, this chapter examines several kinds of leader characteristics: inherited traits and those springing from early childhood experience; attitudes toward relationships with other people; and qualities differentiating effective from ineffective leaders. Modern researchers tend to stress nurture over nature. Studies of biographical factors (IQ, birth order, childrearing styles, and socioeconomic variables) show that leaders are more intelligent than nonleaders, not first-born, used to making decisions from an early age, and from a higher socioeconomic group than followers. In the human relations area, leaders are above average at social interaction, are people-oriented, and are good talkers and listeners. Traits that distinguish effective from ineffective leaders include strong goal orientation, self-confidence, and proactivity--the ability to act, rather than passively react. Reasonable intelligence and good communication skills are worthy criteria for selecting, evaluating, and training school administrators. In promotion decisions, superiors should consider those with clear, well-articulated goals and the intitiative and determination to accomplish them. Although the above depiction of the "ideal" leader is sketchy, the composite picture may help administrators with evaluation and priority-setting tasks. (MLH)

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Chapter 1

Portrait of a Leader

Jo Ann Mazzarella and Thomas Grundy

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Chapter 1
Portrait of a Leader

Jo Ann Mazzarella and Thomas Grundy

What makes a good leader? Some cynics (perhaps they are realists) might respond: white males of the protestant persuasion. If these leaders reside in the American East, they would be those whose ancestors came across on the Mayflower; if they live in the West, they would be those whose ancestors, braving deprivation and death, rolled across the purple plains in covered wagons. In other words, a leader is someone just like me, just a little better.

What are the qualities of a good leader? Well, a leader is trustworthy, loyal, courteous, kind—more of an Eagle than a Boy Scout, really. He wears the uniform of the state and the times, and he wears it well. Today that means his hair touches his ears and maybe his collar; his suit is well cut and accentuated by a somewhat wide and not-too-loud tie; and his penny loafers (an acceptable leftover from ivy-league collegiate days) are polished. The body underneath, of course, is toned by frequent evening workouts at the gym and lunchtime joggings. And he is still, usually, a he and white.

Flippant though this may seem, this portrait is fairly representative of the majority of leaders in U.S. society today.

Before we attempt a more serious abstract portrait of the leader, it is important to remember that the leader does not exist in a vacuum, but in an environment made up of people (subordinates and supervisors), who are acted upon by historical, philosophical, religious, cultural, social influences/assumptions/biases and who in turn bring these influences and pressures to bear when they interact with the "leaders." After all, leadership involves interaction; it is not simply the impersonal delegation of duties and responsibilities from machine to machine. No matter how objective and scientific our studies are or appear to be or how objective we try to be in our dealings with others, leadership remains a human activity. Hence, successful leaders must be ultimately aware that they are humans interacting with other humans at a given time and place.

What follows, then, is at best a picture, a still life, a portrait in time of what we *now* assume to be the qualities that make up a leader in *our* culture, for to be effective, a leader must be *of* this culture or at least preeminently aware of what makes up this culture. The effective leader must be aware of society's taboos and restraints as well as its loves and indulgences. It may well be arguable that a leader, to be effective, must share that belief structure.

As the way we act tells others much about "who we are" and "where we come from," so does how we define the words or terms we use. Daniel Duke puts it this way: "By identifying the properties associated with leadership, an

understanding may be gained of prevailing structures of social meaning. How people make sense of leadership can tell us a great deal about how they regard themselves, their society, and the future." We would ask you to be aware, then, that in our attempt to define leadership and what makes a good leader, we will inevitably bring some of our own and our culture's biases and assumptions to bear.

After beginning with a brief history of research on the personal characteristics of leaders, we examine findings on such biographical factors as intelligence, birth order, childrearing variables, and socioeconomic background. Next we consider how leaders interact and communicate with people. Another set of findings deals with character qualities that distinguish effective from ineffective leaders; we look at leaders' goal orientations, their sense of personal security, and their proactivity. Finally, we outline the implications of all these findings for the selection, evaluation, and training of school leaders..

The Characteristics of Leaders

What kind of people become leaders? Those of high or average intelligence? The rich or the poor? Gregarious people or the strong, silent type?

And what kind of people make good or effective leaders? Those who follow the rules to the letter or those who stretch them a little? Those who are clearly aware of their goals or those who rely on their instincts? Secure people or those who are secretly insecure?

In the early twentieth century, leadership researchers concentrated almost solely on the personal traits of leaders. They studied the characteristics of Indian chiefs, football captains, or Girl Scout leaders and frequently came up with very different conclusions about leaders' characteristics.

They often then used these conclusions to make generalizations about all leaders. As each study about a different kind of leader uncovered new characteristics, the list of characteristics grew until it was too large to be of any use. Critics of the "trait" approach to leadership theory pointed to the unwieldy nature of the list and to the widely varied characteristics to substantiate their claim that there are no leader traits that will hold for all leaders. As Warren Bennis remarked of the leaders he studied, other than demonstrating certain similar abilities, they were "tremendously diverse. They were tall, short, fat, thin .... They evinced no common pattern of psychological makeup or background."

Indeed, after years of data collection, such trait theories were largely abandoned in favor of situational theories of leadership based on the belief that there are no inherent leadership traits, just leader styles or behaviors that may change radically from one situation to another. "Situationists" believe that a person who is a leader in one situation may be a follower in another. This means that traits useful in one situation may actually be disastrous in others. Hence, leaders are not born with any particular traits that determine leadership. Situationists have less interest in who a leader is than in what the leader does in

a given situation or environment.

It may be a bit premature, however, to throw out trait research and theories. If looking at a large number of trait studies of different types of leaders yields some common traits or characteristics, then our conclusions may have some value. That only one study shows leaders are differentiated from the followers by intelligence does not mean much; if twenty studies about twenty different types of leaders show it, the findings are more convincing.

It also makes sense to use findings about a particular leader to make generalizations about this kind of leader alone. Each kind of leader has a number of unique characteristics. Studies about Girl Scout leaders are quite valuable to Girl Scout leaders—and those of school leaders most valuable to school leaders.

Recently research has turned again to leader traits and characteristics—this time to the characteristics of effective leaders. Unlike the older studies, which compared leaders with followers, the newer studies sought to find out what traits distinguish good leaders from poor leaders. To adherents of what could be called the "new trait theory" it very much matters who the leader is. These researchers have concluded that, regardless of the situation, some traits are characteristic of many effective leaders—or, at least, of effective educational leaders.

This renewed interest in the characteristics of effective leaders suggests that it may be time to look again at the early trait research to see what is worth saving and what implications it has for present leaders. Explored in these pages are the most significant findings of previous trait research and the findings of more recent research on educational leaders in an attempt to paint a portrait of what an effective leader looks like.

It is important to remember that none of this research reveals any single characteristic that determines leadership. Rather it suggests that there are groups or "constellations" of qualities that appear to correlate with leadership. Not all leaders have these traits, and not even all effective leaders have all of them. Many followers have many of them, and many more have a few of them. Yet people who have many of these characteristics do appear to have a better chance of being effective leaders than do those who have none.

These pages look at several kinds of leader characteristics: inherited traits and those that spring from early childhood experiences; attitudes toward and relationships with other people; and characteristic qualities that differentiate effective from ineffective leaders.

Readers may want to accompany this chapter with an imaginary checklist to see how they compare to this portrait of an effective leader.

Nature and Nurture

If leaders do have traits and characteristics that separate them from followers, these traits must be acquired somewhere. Some characteristics, like intelligence, are believed to derive from an as yet imperfectly understood

combination of genetic endowment and early nurturing. Other characteristics, like ease in groups and cooperativeness, are believed to spring chiefly from parental influences. Endowments like socioeconomic status come solely from environmental factors, the family situation in which the leader was born.

Most if not all the modern researchers stress nurture over nature. For example, in their study of effective leaders, Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus (1985) say it is a myth that "leaders are born, not made":

> Biographies of great leaders sometimes read as if they had entered the world with an extraordinary genetic endowment, that somehow their future leadership role was preordained. Don't believe it. The truth is that major capacities and competencies of leadership can be learned, and we are all educable, at least if the basic desire to learn is there and we do not suffer from serious learning disorders. Furthermore, whatever natural endowments we bring to the role of leadership, they *can* be enhanced; nurture is far more important than nature in determining who becomes a successful leader.

This is not to suggest that it is easy to learn to be a leader. There is no simple formula, no rigorous science, no cookbook that leads inexorably to successful leadership. Instead it is a deeply human process, full of trial and error, victories and defeats, timing and happenstance, intuition and insight. Learning to be a leader is somewhat like learning to be a parent or a lover; your childhood and adolescence provide you with basic values and role models. Books can help you understand what's going on, but for those who are ready, most of the learning takes place during the experience itself.

Other writers, too, stress the process of growing into leadership—that the "training" is carried out throughout adolescence and into adulthood, indeed into the jobs themselves. Reflecting on their studies of effective principals, Edward Wynne and R. Bruce McPherson state:

> The values and attitudes of principals that are identified as important in our research are not innate traits as much as they are acquired perspectives. They have developed over a lifetime of complex socialization and contact with varied role models. Furthermore, they have been tested and refined in the fire of institutional life.

In this section we explore the characteristics leaders acquire early in life, those they are born with or acquire from their early interactions with their parents. Many such traits or endowments have been investigated, but only a few repeatedly show a significant relationship with leadership.

Those who reject the trait theory of leadership are fond of listing, with amusement, the large number of leadership traits that have been identified. If every study turns up a different trait, they reason, perhaps none of the traits is really significantly correlated with leadership. Jack Speiss has put it:

> Scholars duly noted that leaders are older, taller, heavier, more athletic, better appearing, and brighter than followers. Leaders can be considered superior to followers in scholarship, knowledge, insight,

originality, adaptability, initiative, responsibility, persistence, self-confidence, emotional control, sociability, diplomacy, tact, popularity, prestige, and cooperativeness.

Although such critics have gone too far in dismissing all leadership traits, there is an important warning implicit in their observations: it is crucial not to base generalizations about all leaders on isolated studies. Rather, to find *general* leadership traits it is necessary to look at the body of the research as a whole to see what traits appear again and again in different kinds of studies of different kinds of leaders.

IQ

In 1940, Charles Bird reviewed twenty studies exploring the personal characteristics of leaders. He found that seventy-nine different traits had been examined, with only a few looked at by more than one researcher, which dampened his enthusiasm considerably for any "trait theory" of leadership. One characteristic, however, that appeared repeatedly in studies of leaders was intelligence. In at least ten studies reviewed, the leaders were found to be, on the whole, more intelligent than their followers.

Bird warns, however, that the distinction is not absolute. He notes that there are many followers who are more intelligent than leaders and concludes that "intelligence, therefore, is a contributing factor to leadership, but taken by itself, without assistance from other traits, it does not account for leadership." It should also be remembered that such studies reveal statistical correlations only. That is, high intelligence and leadership appear to be often found together—more often than chance—but are not necessarily related as cause and effect.

Ralph Stogdill, looking at 124 studies of the characteristics of leadership, found 23 studies that showed leaders are usually brighter than followers. Although many of these studies were of child or student leaders, Stogdill felt that the results were applicable in other contexts. Yet Stogdill, too, warned that "there is considerable overlapping of intelligence test scores, indicating that superior intelligence is not an absolute requirement for leadership."

It might seem that the implications of these findings are that those with the highest IQs will always emerge as leaders. However, Bernard Bass (1960) has reviewed a number of studies that show things are not so simple. Bass found that leaders usually have higher intelligence than followers, but not too much higher. He found that leaders' intelligence is often only slightly above average for their respective groups. For example, in a group of mean IQ of 100, someone with an IQ of 160 has very little chance to emerge as leader of that group. Instead, the leader will have an IQ between 115 and 130. Bass ventured several possible explanations for this finding: a "too superior" leader might not be concerned with the group's problems; he or she might not share "interests or goals" with a group; the very intelligent leader might not be able to communicate with the group; and, finally, this sort of leader might exhibit ideas that are too radi-

cal to be acceptable to followers.

What Bass found to be true of leaders in general appears also to be true of leaders in education, according to Robert Wilson's study of effective Ohio superintendents. This study revealed that successful superintendents are intelligent and good students, but not "gifted."

Birth Order

Since intelligence is correlated with leadership, it makes sense that researchers would look in turn at other correlates of intelligence in an attempt to link them, too, with leadership and leadership potential. According to Bass, several research reviews indicate that the intelligence of the firstborn is less than that of the youngest of the family. Herbert Yahraes, however, looking at a number of other studies, found that firstborns got higher scores on intelligence than did younger children and that scores on intelligence tests grew worse as the number of children increased. According to these findings, the firstborn, rather than a younger child, would be more likely to become an adult leader because he or she is more likely to have the highest intelligence of the siblings.

Since the findings appear to be irreconcilable, it is more useful to look at other effects of birth order. Bass cites additional studies that report the oldest child as more socially maladjusted, more conservative, less aggressive, less self-confident, more introverted, and less inclined toward leadership than other children. Elizabeth Hurlock, too, in her work on child development, found that the oldest child lacks self-confidence and leadership qualities.

Bass guessed that one reason firstborns suffer from so many problems that inhibit leadership is that parents of firstborns are inexperienced and less secure in their marriage and finances. Another reason is that older children have to adjust to decreased attention. Hurlock cited parental overprotectiveness and anxiety about sickness and nursing as additional causes for the firstborn's insecurity.

These findings appear to contradict the popular view that the firstborn child is more success-oriented and achievement-oriented than the children born later. Yet as we shall see in later sections, this desire for success or achievement may not be as important a component as other characteristics—such as ability to deal with people or to be a nonconformist when necessary.

We might conclude from all this, as did Bass, that "all other things being equal, we expect the younger siblings to attempt more leadership as an adult that the older siblings to some slight extent."

Here again, it is important to remember that birth order alone (or any single characteristic) does not in any way determine or guarantee leadership ability. This is merely one of a combination of attributes and traits that make leadership more likely. Those who are firstborn ought not to be discouraged from attempting to realize their leadership capabilities. Firstborns who have many of the other characteristics described in this chapter have a good chance to be successful leaders.

Indeed, in some families the firstborn may be the child who is reared or treated in such a way as to most develop leadership abilities. For example, in stable, one-parent households (or even two-parent households where both parents work) the eldest child may be encouraged to take on leadership roles and thus may well acquire more leadership abilities than the younger siblings. Moreover, in extended families, where other adults are present to provide support for the new parents, the oldest child may not suffer from the lack of security and parental inexperience that hampers the parents of "nuclear" families.

Childrearing Variables

Bass reviewed a number of studies that uncovered childrearing techniques or styles that appear to be related to leadership. In one study, children who are allowed to participate in family decision-making are more resourceful, self-reliant, cooperative, and at ease in groups. Bass believes that such characteristics facilitate potential to be a successful leader.

Another study cited by Bass concluded that "sociability and cooperativeness" were greater when parents were clear and consistent, explained decisions to their children, offered opportunities for decision-making, had rapport with their children, and understood their children's problems. Bass believes that "sociability and cooperativeness" are important in the development of leadership potential.

Socioeconomic Variables

Stogdill found fifteen early studies (1904-1947) and nineteen later studies (1948-1970) that suggested leaders come from a higher socioeconomic background than do followers. These studies were done with a wide variety of leaders and followers.

Bass found the same. In spite of the myth that great presidents are born in log cabins, Bass noted that few U.S. presidents have come from lower socioeconomic groups. He also mentions a study that found that town leaders tend to be children of town leaders and that 70 percent of the fathers of businessmen are businessmen.

One indication that this correlation may apply to school administrators as well is found in the work of John Hemphill and colleagues. In their comparison of 232 elementary school principals to the population as a whole, these researchers found that disproportionately more were children of business or professional men and appreciably fewer were from laboring or farming families.

Going beyond the immediate family and into the community, Wynne and McPherson point to "an important preliminary hypothesis" that has emerged from their research: "good principals may tend to come from family and community environments which socialize them to the skills and values associated with fostering community and comfortably exercising strong authority."

To summarize these studies of biographical factors, there is good

evidence that leaders have a higher (but not much higher) IQ than do followers and that leaders generally come from higher socioeconomic groups. Evidence concerning parenting styles indicates that leaders may be the products of more "liberal" parents. Evidence concerning birth order is less clear, but firstborns seem less likely to be leaders than do their siblings.

None of these characteristics—neither high IQ, nor birth order, nor status, nor liberal parents—is a guarantee of leadership ability. Nor are these the only qualities correlated with leadership. The most that can be said is that research shows that many—but not all—leaders have these qualities.

Person to Person

One finding to emerge repeatedly in studies of leaders, including studies of educational leaders, is that leaders are people oriented. They are outgoing and successful in dealing with people and they have good social and interpersonal skills. Such characteristics separate both leaders from nonleaders and effective from ineffective leaders.

A number of outstanding principals were interviewed by Arthur Blumberg and William Greenfield. That successful leaders put a high importance on dealing with people is well illustrated by a statement made by the outstanding principal identified by Blumberg and Greenfield only as "John":

> If you want to cultivate kids you really have to care about them and convey that caring to them. You've got to be seen as more than just the guy who suspends kids from school. I try to talk to them in the halls, at ball games, in the cafeteria, in classrooms. I try to get to know as many of them by name as I can. In a large school that's tough, but a principal should know four or five hundred kids by name, even in a school of fifteen hundred.

Indeed, the leader by definition must work well with people; if not, then who's going to follow?

Social Participation

In their national study of the principalship, Richard Gorton and Kenneth McIntyre found that effective principals have as their strongest asset "an ability to work with different kinds of people having various needs, interests, and expectations." The researchers added:

> They seem to understand people, know how to motivate them, and how to deal effectively with their problems. It is primarily this factor, rather than a technical expertise, that caused the "significant others" to perceive these principals as accessible and effective administrators.

Keith Goldhammer and his colleagues, in a much earlier, but similar, study, identified principals of outstanding schools (institutions they labeled

"beacons of brilliance"). These researchers found that principals of these good schools "had an ability to work effectively with people and to secure their cooperation." They also found that the principals "used group processes effectively and appeared to have intuitive skill and empathy for their associates."

The effectiveness of such an approach is illustrated by a statement from another of Blumberg and Greenfield's effective principals who spoke about his effort to work with teachers.

> The first year my expectations were that we would meet, talk about instruction, and get to know each other. It was just an opportunity to sit down and let each other know how we felt, the things that bugged us, and so forth. It was really something. For the first time they started to talk about caring what was going on in the school, not just in their own classroom.

Others, too, have stressed the importance of the principal's involvement. Shirley M. Hord and Gene E. Hall, for example, found that, in "facilitating instructional improvement," the most effective principals are those who are most actively involved. Labeling three principal styles in order of increasing effectiveness—responder, manager, initiator—they found that the initiator, the principal who was most actively involved with teachers, was the most effective.

What about successful superintendents? Sitting in the central office, are they too far removed from students, teachers, and parents to profit from good social skills and abilities? Apparently not. Robert Wilson, in a study of successful Ohio superintendents, found that the successful superintendent "is a very personable and friendly individual who believes in the importance of human relations skills and demonstrates them daily." Outstanding Ohio superintendents also participate widely in the community—in church, PTA, civic, social, and hobby clubs—because they depend heavily on face-to-face contact for building rapport with citizens. According to Wilson, the results of these public relations efforts are evident in the success these superintendents have with school bond elections, at the bargaining table, and in their relations with media representatives and schools boards.

This kind of interest in people is also uncovered in studies of other types of leaders. Charles Bird found several studies in which leaders were found to be more extroverted than were followers. Bird defined an *extrovert* as "a person who prefers to engage overtly in social activities, to manipulate the external world, to mix with people, to make decisions without regard for fine distinctions, to delight in action, or to show indifference to criticism."

Ralph Stogdill reviewed numerous earlier studies showing that leaders participate in more group activities than do followers. Many early studies, as a well as the later studies he looked at (after 1948), also show strong correlations between leadership and sociability. Thirty-five of these later studies uncovered positive findings regarding what he called "social characteristics"; he concluded that leaders are active participants in social activities. According to Stogdill, the studies suggested that leaders interact easily with a wide range of personalities and that their interaction is valued by others.

If sociability is correlated with leadership, children's future ability may be influenced by their social participation. Bernard Bass reports a study showing that if parents participate in social activities, children do also. Indeed, he makes involvement and participation a cornerstone to leadership:

> The member who talks and participates most actively in the group's activities is the one most likely to emerge as a leader. Leaders differ from followers in this ability to initiate and sustain interaction. (1981)

The more studies that are done on leaders and leadership, the more interaction is stressed. Leonard Sayles repeatedly stresses the importance of active involvement on the part of the manager:

> The conclusions are inescapable: managers are peripatetic; their working life is a never-ending series of contacts with other people. They must talk and listen, telephone, call meetings, plead, argue, negotiate.

Interaction, then, is central to leadership.

Communication

As well as being sociable or people-oriented, leaders appear to have aptitudes and skills that help them in social situations. They are born with verbal abilities and they have picked up the skills they need to interact well with others; they know how to communicate.

It appears possible that leaders are born with a natural facility for language. Bass cites a number of studies supporting "the proposition that successful leaders are apt verbally." Apparently, not only leaders in general, but effective school leaders in particular, are good at communicating. Gorton and McIntyre, in their study of the principalship, found that "significant others" (those knowledgeable about the principal's performance) see effective principals as strong in oral communication. Blumberg and Greenfield found in their indepth study of eight outstanding principals that, among the five characteristics they held in common, one was "extremely well-developed expressive abilities."

> All of these principals had very well-developed interpersonal skills and were able to communicate effectively in face-to-face interaction with a diverse range of individuals and groups.

In his study of effective innovative leaders, Warren Bennis identified communication as one of the five "competencies" each of these leaders evinced. And among the categories proposed by Wynne and McPherson as being "specifically related to on-the-job challenges faced by good principals" is one they call "communitarian values."

Of William Foster's three propositions concerning leadership, one is that "leadership is conditioned on language." A chief function of the leader,

says Foster, is to clear away the distortions that enter language through some people's desire to maintain their domination and power.

> Poverty becomes the fault of the poor, and not of the economic system. And closer to home, student failure is put on the individual—lack of motivation, lack of ability, poor environment and so on, and this becomes a convenient mechanism for not examining the basic structure of schooling. Some labels are accurate, but others are not: leadership is telling the difference. Leadership involves the penetration of labels and communicative structures, of taking freely constituted democratic participation seriously, of assisting the growth of individuals caught in the cycle of domination through language.

Foster, then, would have us reexamine what we mean by communication and leadership. Roland Barth makes a similar point when he says that "we need to devise mechanisms in schools that will allow adults constantly to question embedded ways of doing things."

No matter how we look at it, communication—whether it be for the purpose of defending or maintaining the status—quo, penetrating labels and communicative structures, influencing, persuading, explaining—is central to leadership. This is especially true for an educational leader, whose end product (if you will) is people—in Keith Leithwood and Donald Montgomery's words, "the educated person as a self-directed problem solver."

Listening

Blumberg and Greenfield's outstanding principal known as John had this to say about listening:

> Teachers have to see you as caring, as listening to their problems. And after listening, you have to follow through so that teachers know you cared enough to do something and then communicate back to them. You may not follow through the way the teacher thought you should, but at least you did something. You heard the problem and you dealt with it in a way that you saw fit.

Blumberg and Greenfield note that the ability to listen was common to the effective principals they studied. These effective leaders were very sensitive to what was going on around them. They were not only good at communicating ideas, they were good at absorbing ideas, too. (Another way of saying this is that communication, if there is to really be any communication, is a two—way street.)

Goldhammer and his colleagues found that principals of outstanding schools "listened well to parents, teachers, and pupils." And Gorton and McIntyre as well found that effect.ve principals listen to students, community, and staff.

Sayles lists seven "specific interaction skills" of business executives, one of which is

> Listening ability–the ability to remain silent over reasonably long

periods so that others can present a complex or highly emotional view and where others need a good listener in order to express delicate or embarrassing issues.

All this interrelated research points toward the same thing. One quality that makes leaders different from followers and good leaders different from poor leaders is the way they relate to people. Most true leaders enjoy social participation and do a lot of it, have well-developed communication skills, and are good listeners.

Character Qualities

Some research studies have suggested that effective educational leaders have particular character qualities that make them different from less effective leaders. These studies suggest that effective leaders (as well as having the good human relations skills described in the previous section) are goal oriented, energetic, secure, proactive, and well aware of the dynamics of power.

Two things make this more recent research on leadership traits even more valuable to school people than was the earlier trait research. The first is that current researchers are focusing on educational leaders only and looking for leadership characteristics that are unique to this group.

The second reason is that this research looks at the characteristics that separate effective from ineffective leaders. Rather than examining the traits that identified good leaders, early researchers looked only at the traits that distinguish leaders from nonleaders. By lumping good leaders in with bad, these early researchers made it unlikely that they would find any traits in common. Dorwin Cartwright and Alvin Zander, among others, have suggested that studying instead the traits that distinguish effective from ineffective leaders may well have more valuable results.

In recent years, several studies have looked at one kind of leader—the school principal—and used the findings to make pronouncements about this kind of leader alone. These studies looked only at effective principals and tried to discern what makes them different from other principals.

Goals

Blumberg and Greenfield decided the best way to gather data about effective principals was to talk with them personally. They conducted lengthy indepth interviews with eight principals identified by teachers, parents, district administrators, and students as outstanding.

Following their detailed examination of these principals, Blumberg and Greenfield made several generalizations. One of these was that principals who are effective leaders seem to be "highly goal-oriented and to have a keen sense of goal clarity." The researchers noted that these effective principals "were continually alert for opportunities to make things happen, and if the op-

portunities didn't present themselves, they created them."

The effective principal whom Blumberg and Greenfield identified as Paul said it well:

> Once I took leadership, after that first year, I never relinquished the fact that I was their principal. I accepted the fact that I wasn't going to be their buddy. I accepted the idea that I was going to take some flack for things I had not done; I accepted the idea that if there were screw-ups I'd take the responsibility for them but that I would also take the role of making final decisions when necessary. And things changed from that point on.

He set clear goals for himself, for how he would act and present himself, for how he would behave in given situations.

In other words, effective principals have clear goals and will work hard to try to achieve them. Blumberg and Greenfield felt that almost every school principal has a number of goals for the school; yet for most, the mere espousal of goals appears to be enough and substitutes for action.

Blumberg and Greenfield were not the first to discern the importance of strong goal orientation. When Ralph Stogdill reviewed 163 studies of leaders between 1948 and 1970, one of the qualities that appeared often was "vigor and persistence in pursuit of goals." He discovered, too, that leaders in these studies had a "strong drive for task completion." On looking over all these studies, Stogdill observed that this characteristic "differentiates leaders from followers, effective from ineffective leaders, and higher echelon from lower echelon leaders."

Charles Bird, too, after looking at twenty studies of leadership, found that one of the five leader character qualities that was mentioned with frequency was "initiative." In their study of principal effectiveness, Leithwood and Montgomery concluded: "Goals are the long term aspirations held by principals for work in their school. No other dimension of principal behavior is more consistently linked to school improvement by current empirical research than Goals."

Indeed, virtually every current study of leadership that we have looked at emphasizes the importance, if not the centrality, of goals to being an effective leader. And when you think about it, it makes perfect sense. To lead means to take somebody someplace. If you do not know where you are going, you cannot really be leading someone "there." Hence, vision or the ability to visualize one's goals, is a prerequisite for leadership. As John Pejza states, "Without a vision to challenge followers with, there's no possibility of a principal being a leader."

Bennis identifies vision as one of the five most important characteristics of the effective leader. He defines vision as "the capacity to create and communicate a compelling vision of a desired state of affairs, a vision (or paradigm, context, frame—all those words serve) that clarifies the current situation and induces commitment to the future." One who leads, then, must know where one is as well as where one is going.

Of course, it is not the mere presence of a goal, but the kind of goal, that establishes the leader's effectiveness. Leithwood and Montgomery made the important discovery that the most effective principals were those who had undergone a process of growth wherein their concerns and goals shifted "from personal needs through interpersonal relations to the school program and finally to student achievement."

A principal operating from a "personal needs" orientation might enter the profession largely for its prestige or financial rewards. This leader might spend a great deal of time worrying about personal advancement and schedule activities and delegate authority to free up time or reduce his or her responsibility.

At the next level, the principal might concentrate on being friends with everyone, taking a make-no-waves approach that could jeopardize students' educational needs. At the third level, even though the focus is on the school program, students may still get lost in the bureaucratic shuffle. At the highest level, however, where student achievement is the basic goal, the students' welfare does not get set aside. After all, the purpose of school is to educate students.

It is clear, then, that effective school leaders are people of action. They have the ability to establish, visualize, and clearly communicate goals—goals that are ambitious and specifically tied into student improvement.

Security

Blumberg and Greenfield also found that effective educational leaders are secure; that is, they are not threatened by new ideas or confrontations with others. "Their sense of themselves as people and what it is they are about seems rather highly developed." The authors believe that this sort of security and sureness about themselves fosters a high tolerance for ambiguity. They can survive in a confusing situation where rules are ill-defined. They can live with uncertainty. This tolerance for ambiguity means effective leaders are not afraid of positive change.

There is a similarity between these findings and those of Keith Goldhammer and his colleagues, who made this comment about principals of effective schools:

> The ambiguities that surround them and their work were of less significance than the goals they felt were important to achieve. As a result, they found it possible to live with the ambiguities of their position.

Openness, security, and tolerance for ambiguity seem to make successful administrators unafraid of change when it is needed. This ability to change and to effect necessary change is of paramount importance for a leader. Indeed, James Lipham defines *leadership* as "that behavior of an individual which initiates a new structure in interaction within a social system." Note the inter-

dependency of the "parts" of leadership: to initiate change implies to have goals, which, if they are visualized, have more chance of being effected.

Proactivity

One outstanding principal interviewed by Blumberg and Greenfield was faced with a seemingly unsolvable problem. His desire for student input into school committees was blocked by teachers who threatened to resign from committees that had student members. His solution?

> The answer to this situation was an end run. We formed a Parent-Teacher-Student Council, which was outside the formal organization of the school, but it wasn't a tea and cookies PTA. We met to discuss problems that involved parents, teachers, and students. Primarily, it was a sounding board for faculty meetings and departmental chairmen. It worked.

Blumberg and Greenfield noted that their effective principals do not merely accept all the rules and customs that make up "the way things are." They are "proactive," always testing the limits in an effort to change things that no one else believes can be changed. "Leadership," says John Pejza,

> requires a vision, a sense of dissatisfaction with the status quo, a hunger to see improvement. When you have a vision, you make a mental journey from the known to the unknown, and you create the future from a montage of current facts, hopes, dreams, dangers, and opportunities. . . . A leader continuously scans the environment noticing where change is needed. As someone has said, a successful leader is one who aims at something no one else can see and hits it.

Yet leaders do not take foolish risks and do take care to establish a power base, which for principals means gaining support from significant groups both inside and outside the school. Effective leaders are aware of the need to establish alliances to get things done. Blumberg and Greenfield emphasize that their principals are strongly aware of the dynamics of power.

Goldhammer and his research team, too, discovered that the most successful principals "found it difficult to live within the constraints of the bureaucracy; they frequently violated the chain of command, seeking relief for their problems from whatever sources that were potentially useful." Nevertheless, they "expressed concern for the identification of the most appropriate procedures through which change could be secured."

Similarly, Wynne and McPherson argue that one of the categories or traits of an effective principal is "courage," by which they mean not so much physical daring (though that may not be irrelevant), but rather

> the willingness to consciously expose oneself to circumstances which may generate serious harmful consequences—either economic, emotional, or physical.

The research suggests that the leaders who follow rules to the letter, who never make waves and never challenge authority, are probably less effective than leaders who stretch the rules a little or fight to accomplish goals that are important to them. As Blumberg and Greenfield say,

> A characteristic of principals who lead seems to be that they behave in ways that enable *them to be in charge of the job* and *not let the job be in charge of them*. They are not pawns of the system. They seem to be adept at playing the games on which their survival depends, but they don't let the game playing consume too much of their energy.

It is clear that even though these effective leaders stretch the rules, they are not rebels; they *do* play the game. The studies agree that these leaders understand how power works and know how to survive.

Implications for Selection, Evaluation, and Training

Not all the findings about the characteristics of effective leaders reported in this chapter are simply and immediately applicable as selection and evaluation criteria and administrator training objectives. For example, training programs cannot alter characteristics that are inherent or acquired at an early age. And some traits that are desirable in leaders, such as proactivity, security, initiative, and tolerance for ambiguity, are difficult to measure.

Nevertheless, it is likely that we will never identify any characteristics required for being an effective leader that are easily measurable or teachable. As we learn more about leadership, it becomes clearer that there are no simple ways to identify it or foster it. Furthermore, it is beginning to be apparent that traditional methods of selection, evaluation, and training, though easy to implement, may not truly be relevant to the production of effective leaders. Blumberg and Greenfield found little to suggest that university graduate training had much direct or observable influence on any of the effective leaders they studied. They suggested a switch from "formal indices of competence" like years of teaching and administrative experience, number of advanced degrees, and grade point averages to more relevant measures of competence. Goldhammer and his colleagues likewise discovered that principals who were effective could not, on the basis of their formal preparation, be distinguished from those who were not.

Because the "values and attitudes" that help make a principal effective "develop over a lifetime of complex socialization," Wynne and McPherson argue that

> priority should be given to affect-oriented training, as compared to more cognitive approaches. In other words, persons being trained to become principals should be *socialized* into their potential roles, as compared to being *taught* about them.

Wynne and McPherson recommend "giving greater attention to background-oriented interviewing; fast track perspectives in advancement (for appropriate candidates); and an 'officer candidate type' socialization process."

Even though the characteristics of effective leaders are difficult to measure or teach, we have to make some effort to use them in evaluation, selection, and training simply because they are better than the methods we are now using. Some possible applications, outlined below, come to mind.

Selection and Evaluation

One finding in the section on Nature and Nurture can be helpful in administrator selection. It does seem desirable that some minimal level of intelligence be demanded for admission into administrator jobs or training programs. Kenneth St. Clair and Kenneth McIntyre have suggested that the work of researchers like Stogdill lends "credence to our long-held notion that ignoramuses should be selected out of preparation programs." Although there are those who would argue the irrelevance of such tests as analogies tests or the Graduate Record Examination, St. Clair and McIntyre believe that the results coordinate closely enough with intelligence to be valid selectors of candidates for administrator training programs.

St. Clair and McIntyre do not worry that using such selection criteria might encourage the selection of administrators who are too intellectually superior to their subordinates to be effective. They believe that there have been "too few occasions to test this finding in educational settings to accept it as a cause for concern." And beyond this lack of evidence, one flinches at the prospect of rejecting applicants because they are *too* intelligent.

Another criterion that can be applied in the selection and evaluation of administrators is their communication skills. Prospective administrators can be given paper and pencil tests that measure verbal ability and extroversion. The personal interview would appear to be especially helpful in gauging how well job candidates or current administrators communicate and listen. Superiors, subordinates, and peers might give administrators or applicants for administrative programs evaluations on how well they get along with and understand the problems of different kinds of people. Although this smacks a little bit of a popularity contest, the research reviewed here strongly suggests that administrators who have trouble dealing with people are going to have a much harder time being effective leaders.

In choosing teachers and administrators for promotion, superiors ought to look for those who need little supervision and who accomplish a lot. Too often, those who are promoted are those who do what they're told and do everything by the book. Rather, those who are given positions of leadership ought to be those with initiative and minds of their own. They ought to be those who have clear goals, can articulate them, and have shown concrete evidence of progress at moving toward those goals.

Although feelings of inner security are probably too complex to be

measured during selection procedures, it seems possible that attitudes toward change can be elicited and assessed, and actual changes initiated can be measured.

Training

Training programs might do well to put strong emphasis on improving communication skills, both listening and verbal expression. Training programs ought also to accentuate the importance of being a good communicator; they can emphasize that time spent "merely" communicating is never lost and pays off in leadership effectiveness.

Although training programs are not likely to inculcate initiative in those who haven't got it, they can encourage those who are naturally endowed with initiative not to be afraid to use it. Often, training programs, rather than fostering personal initiative, squelch it through an overabundance of rules, structures, and regulations that do not leave room for personal goal-setting. As in the case of initiative, training programs are not capable of instilling feelings of security, but they can emphasize an openness toward change and the importance of the leader's role as change agent.

Finally, it is important to remember that evidence of certain traits does not guarantee that we have a leader. As Daniel Duke has said,

> It is conceivable that there are individuals who manifest all the behaviors associated with leadership, yet fail to embody leadership. Those who attempt to "train" leaders long have recognized this problem. Some master all the necessary operations—from planning to decision making—but they do not convey the impression of leadership.

Leadership seems to be a *gestalt* phenomenon, greater than the sum of its behavioral parts.

Conclusion

A small part of the portrait of the effective educational leader has been revealed by each of the research studies and reviews mentioned here. Now, like the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle, all the fragments can be assembled to reveal a more coherent (though by no means complete) portrait of an effective educational leader. The early research revealed not characteristics that separate effective from ineffective leaders, but characteristics that separate most leaders from followers.

According to this research, typical educational leaders are a little more intelligent (but not too much more) than nonleaders. As children they were probably not firstborn and were probably allowed at an early age to make many of their own decisions. It is likely that they came from a higher socioeconomic group than did their followers.

The later research surveyed here fills in the outlines a bit and fleshes out a portrait of a more specific kind of leader—an effective educational leader. According to these findings, effective educational leaders are outgoing, good at working with people, and have good communication abilities and skills. They take initiative, are aware of their goals, and feel secure. As proactive people, they are not afraid to stretch the rules, but also understand the compromises that must be made to get things done.

More of a sketch than a portrait, this depiction of an educational leader leaves out a great deal. Even more important, the sketch itself is not of a real leader but only of an imaginary one. The leader whose characteristics are set down here is a pure "form," who in actuality does not exist. Like the typical voter or the typical consumer, the typical leader is only a composite of common characteristics. No real flesh and blood counterpart exists. The real effective leaders interviewed by Blumberg and Greenfield and others were more different than they were alike.

Then what is the point of an imaginary portrait of a nonexistent leader? Although we cannot hang it on the wall, this composite has several possible uses. As a reflection of our own culture and times, it can perhaps teach us much about ourselves, our conceptions and preconceptions. But more specifically, or more to our immediate purposes, it can help us recognize potential leaders by determining if they have many (but not necessarily all) of these characteristics.

Another use is for evaluation. Those who evaluate administrators can use this portrait to help formulate evaluation criteria. This imaginary portrait can also be used for self-evaluation. Those who are in leadership positions can compare themselves with more effective leaders to see how they measure up.

Also, knowing the characteristics of an effective leader can be useful in planning administrator training programs, as a guide to which aspects of the job ought to be emphasized.

Finally, the most important use for this ideal portrait is to help leaders set priorities. When things get rough and they are tempted to lock themselves in their offices, such a vision can remind them that human relations and communication skills *are* important. When they are coasting along, day-by-day, not going anywhere in particular, it can remind them that being goal-oriented and knowing where they are going *does* make a difference. When they are criticized by superiors for breaking unnecessary rules and cautioned not to make waves, it can give them the courage to continue doing things their own way—as long as that way has been successful in accomplishing their highest priorities. In short, the most important use for this portrait is the function performed by any ideal. It can caution us while at the same time offering us something to strive for.